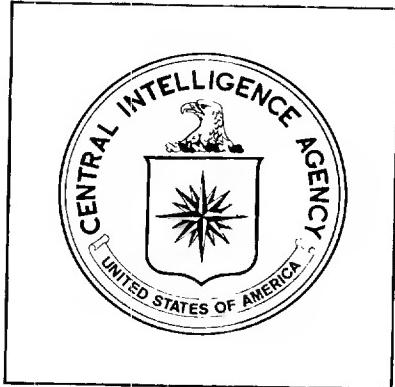


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129

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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

CONTENTS

North Yemen: Hamdi Moves Against Rivals	1
Zaire: Background on Kidnappers of US Students	2
West Africa: New Regional Economic Community Formed	4
Kenya: Government Closes University	6

May 28, 1975

SECRET

North Yemen

Hamdi Moves Against Rivals

Colonel Ibrahim Hamdi, head of the ruling command council, continues to consolidate his power. His latest moves--following his recent successful stripping of power from the ambitious Abu Luhum family--were directed against backers of Sheikh Abdallah al-Ahmar, the country's most powerful tribal leader and head of the Consultative Assembly. While al-Ahmar was on a visit to Saudi Arabia last week, army troops made a quick foray into the territory of a tribal supporter of al-Ahmar and seized an arms cache.

At the same time, Hamdi reportedly ordered a force of paratroopers, artillery, and armor to move to Hajjah, a provincial town in the north, to arrest former deputy commander-in-chief Lt. Colonel Abu Shuarib and to bring him back to Sana "dead or alive." Abu Shuarib, who is al-Ahmar's brother-in-law, is accused of having stolen a large sum of money from the Hajjah branch of the Bank of Yemen and of attempting to fortify himself in the town. The results of the raid are not yet known.

Hamdi has also been conducting a purge of the army. Since mid-May 60 officers--allegedly supporters of al-Ahmar, Abu Shuarib, or the recently neutralized Abu Luhums--have been dismissed. Hamdi has been touring military units, justifying his purge by arguing that he must limit the power of al-Ahmar, who he says has been interfering in military affairs. Hamdi's actions serve to underscore al-Ahmar's current ineffectiveness and inability to protect his closest associates.

Colonel Hamdi has also reacted to opposition by other conservative tribal sheikhs by threatening to dissolve the Consultative Assembly and calling a national referendum on his program. The sheikhs, who dominate the assembly, have attempted to delay Hamdi's program of political modernization by boycotting assembly meetings, thereby preventing a quorum from being mustered. (SECRET NO FOREIGN DISSEM/NO DISSEM ABROAD/CONTROLLED DISSEM)

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Zaire

Background on Kidnappers of US Students

The Popular Revolutionary Party, which was responsible for the kidnaping of one Dutch and three American students in Tanzania last week, is one of several insurgent groups operating in the rugged mountainous area of eastern Zaire bordering Lake Tanganyika. These groups are mostly remnants of a variety of secessionist movements, private armies, and regional organizations that flourished in the early years of Zaire's independence.

The Revolutionary Party itself was reportedly established in Tanzania in 1970 in opposition to the Mobutu regime. Its leaders include veterans of both the rebellion led by Pierre Mulele in western Zaire in 1963 and the "Simba" revolt in eastern Zaire in 1964. The Chinese gave important support to Zairian rebel groups in those years, but had curtailed their assistance even before China and Zaire established diplomatic relations in late 1972.

The Party's present leader, Laurent Kabila, has been associated with rebel causes in eastern Zaire since the early 1960s. During those years he visited both Moscow and Peking. He may have been encouraged to stage the kidnaping by the spectacle of terrorist groups elsewhere getting both attention and satisfaction of their demands by such actions.

Although Party leaders seem able to travel with relative impunity to Tanzania and Uganda, the group is isolated in eastern Zaire and has been unable to make much of an impact. In recent years, its activities have consisted mainly of infrequent small-scale operations against isolated government facilities, banditry against the local inhabitants, and smuggling across Lake Tanganyika.

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2

May 28, 1975

SECRET

SECRET

In the past, Mobutu has been content to keep the Popular Revolutionary Party and other rebel remnants contained in their mountain hideouts. Zairian forces in the area do not have a capability to mount successful counterinsurgency operations, and they probably lack support from the local populace because of their own depredations.

So far, the hostages appear to have been treated well. There is still a chance that the Party will release the hostages under a negotiated settlement. (CONFIDENTIAL)



25X1A

May 28, 1975

SECRET

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West Africa

New Regional Economic Community Formed

1 Representatives of fifteen West African countries agreed in Lagos on May 28 to set up an Economic Community of West African States. The new community, proposed three years ago by Nigeria in a major bid for regional leadership, links, for the first time, the area's five English-, nine French-, and one Portuguese-speaking states in a single cooperative effort.

2 The treaty establishing the community was initialed by the leaders of Dahomey, Gambia, Niger, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mauritania, Sierra Leone, Togo, Upper Volta, and Nigeria, and by representatives of Ghana, Mali, Guinea, and Senegal. Initially, the community will concentrate on "fact-gathering" and building up an organizational staff. Over the next 15 years a unified customs area is to be created by the gradual elimination of tariff barriers and obstacles to free movement among the 130 million people of its member states. The treaty also calls for the coordination of agricultural, industrial, monetary, communication, and energy policies.

✓ Several provisions of the treaty are designed to ease the long-held mistrust that exists between West Africa's French- and English-speaking countries and to quiet fears that the community will be completely dominated by Nigeria, by far the area's largest and economically most powerful state. It provides for the "continuance and further development" of existing smaller groupings, such as the one composed of six French-speaking states. The community is to be administered by an "authority" of heads of state whose decisions are to be unanimous. A fund will be set up to try to promote development projects and to compensate member states for any loss of tariff income they may incur.

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Important differences still exist among the signatories and many details remain to be worked out if the new community is to achieve any measure of success. The Nigerians seem confident that they can sustain interest in the community and put it on a sound footing within five years. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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May 28, 1975

SECRET

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Kenya

Government Closes University

The government of Kenya has closed the University of Nairobi for an indefinite period after clashes between students and police on May 24 and 26. During the past few months students have also demonstrated to protest the murder of regime critic J. M. Kariuki and the government's handling of the case.

The violence which led to the closing of the university began when police attempted last Saturday to disperse students who had beaten two plainclothesmen attending a campus rally. The rally had been called to thwart a progovernment demonstration planned by students from Kenyatta's branch of the Kikuyu tribe. More clashes occurred on Monday when police moved in to break up a campus meeting. According to Nairobi radio, over 100 students were arrested and more than 30 required hospital treatment as a result of the clashes.

The government has apparently been able to clear the campus and disperse the students to their homes. The decision to close the university may have been taken partly to reduce the number of students in the capital on June 1, a major national holiday. The government is bracing for possible anti-Kenyatta demonstrations on that day. (CONFIDENTIAL)



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